

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

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R 031420Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5801

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 1367

E O 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IS, JOT

SUBJECT: STATUS OF MAALE ADUMIM PROJECT

REF: TEL AVIV 0234 AND TEL AVIV 211; JERUSALEM 0352

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: MAR 2 SETTLEMENT ATTEMPT AT MAALE ADUMIM CLIMAXED CONTROVERSY OVER PROJECT FOCUSING ON TYPE OF HOUSING TO BE PROVIDED AT SITE. PROJECT SEEMS TO HAVE BECOME SYMBOL FOR FACTIONS FAVORING MORE RAPID SETTLEMENT IN TERRITORIES, AND COULD BE SCENE OF ADDITIONAL INCIDENTS IN FUTURE. GOI IS COMMITTED TO PROJECT, WITH PRIMARY CONSTRAINT AGAINST FASTER PROGRESS BEING SHORTAGE OF RESOURCES. END SUMMARY.

2. ATTEMPT ON MAR 2 TO ESTABLISH UNAUTHORIZED SETTLEMENT AT MAALE ADUMIM ON WEST BANK (JERUSALEM REFTel) IS CULMINATION OF CONTROVERSY OVER PACE AND TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT AT PROPOSED INDUSTRIAL ZONE WHICH HAS SURROUNDED PROJECT FOR SEVERAL WEEKS. PRESS REPORTING ON SUBJECT OVER THIS PERIOD HAS BEEN SPOTTY AND SOMEWHAT CONFUSING, BUT FOLLOWING SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN STATUS OF PROJECT PRIOR TO MARCH 2.

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3. DURING LAST WEEK IN JANUARY, MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE WAS APPOINTED TO EXAMINE NEED FOR ESTABLISHING WORK CAMP AT PROJECT SITE. COMMITTEE CONSISTED OF MINISTERS OF HOUSING (OFER), COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (BAR-LEV), AND AGRICULTURE (UZAN). COMMITTEE DECIDED ON CONSTRUCTION OF 100 HOUSING UNITS " WITHIN FEW MONTHS", BUT REPORTEDLY AT INSISTENCE OF OFER SPECIFIED THAT SUCH UNITS WERE FOR USE BY WORKERS AT THE SITE, NOT BY PERMANENT RESIDENTS. ACCORDING TO SOME REPORTS, OFER WAS NOT SURE SUCH CAMP WAS NEED AT ALL.

4. AS BACKDROP TO COMMITTEE DECISION, PRESS REPORTED AT TIME THAT POTENTIAL MAALE ADUMIM SETTLERS WERE CLAIMING THAT ESTABLISHMENT OF WORK CAMP, CONTAINING FIFTY PREFAB UNITS AT COST OF IL 3 MILLION, HAD BEEN PROMISED BY MINISTER-WITHOUT-PORTFOLION GALILI IN LTTTER DATED MID-DECEMBER. THE SETTLERS GROUP WAS REPORTEDLY FEARFUL THAT DEVELOPMENT OF MAALE ADUMIM WOULD UNDERGO CONSIDERABLE DELAYS DUE TO THE DOVISH COMPOSITION OF THE MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE.

5. ACCORDING TO ARTICLE IN FEB 25 MAARIV WHICH CITED "AUTHORITIES PLANNING THE SITE", GOI HAS ALLOCATED IL 3-3.5 MILLION FOR THE WORK CAMP, IN ADDITION TO IL 10 MILLION PREVIOUSLY EARMARKED FOR INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT. CAMP WOULD REPORTEDLY CONSIST OF THIRTY UNITS, EACH COMPRISING SINGLE ROOM AND BATH, PLUS COMMUNAL DINING HALL. ACCORDING TO MAARNV, THE PLAN DID NOT PROVIDE FOR FAMILY ACCOMMODATIONS. ARTICLE ADDED THAT POTENTIAL SETTLERS SAW THE EXCLUSION OF FAMILIES AS AN EFFORT TO BYPASS WHAT THEY REGARD AS PROMISE TO ESTABLISH JEWISH SETTLEMENT AT MAALE ADUMIM, SINCE WORKERS WOULD PREFER TO LIVE IN JERUSALEM AND COMMUTE.

6. FOCUS ON CONTROVERSY BY MARCH 2 HAD THUS BECOME QUESTION OF WHETHER FAMILIES, IN ADDITION TO SINGLE WORKERS, WOULD BE HOUSED AT MAALE ADUMIM. ACCORDING TO PRESS, PM RABIN WAS ADVISED OF SETTLEMENT ATTEMPT DURING WEEKLY CABINET SESSION AND RAISED ISSUE IN ORDER TO OBTAIN CABINET CONSENSUS. RESULTING UNANIMOUS CABINET DECISION WAS THAT FAMILIES WOULD BE ALLOWED TO APPLY FOR HOUSING AT MAALE ADUMIM. AT SAME TIME, CABINET REPORTEDLY REMINDED THE "SETTLEMENTNUCLEUS" THAT ILLEGAL

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ACTS WOULD NOT BE TOLERATED AND THAT HOUSING AT MAALE ADUMIM WOULD BE ONLY FOR THOSE EMPLOYED AT THE ENTERPRISES IN THE INDUSTRIAL ZONE.

7. ACCORDING TO JERUSALEM POST ACCOUNT OF CABINET MEETING, RABIN TOLD MEMBERS THAT GOI WAS PROCEEDING TO IMPLEMENT DECISION TAKEN IN NOVEMBER TO CONSTRUCT INDUSTRIAL ZONE

AT MAALE ADUMIM, BUT WOULD NOT PUT UP WITH MOVES DESIGNED TO CREATE FACTIONS.

RABIN POINTED OUT THAT NOVEMBER DECISION WAS TO CONSTRUCT DWELLINGS FOR PERSONS EMPLOYED AT SITE. THAT DECISION DID NOT OBTAIN DWELLINGS FOR FAMILIES, EITHER DURING DEVELOPMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE OR LATER WHEN PROJECT WOULD BE COMPLETED. BUT, RABIN ADDED, NO DECISION HAD YET BEEN TAKEN AS TO WHO WOULD WORK AT MAALE ADUMIM.

8. IN MEETING WITH MINISTERS OFER AND BAR-LEV EVENING MAR 2, DELEGATION FROM SETTLEMENT GROUP REPORTEDLY TRIED TO MAKE POINT THAT MAALE ADUMIM SHOULD BE DESIGNED AS LARGE URBAN DEVELOPMENT. OFER AND BAR-LEM, HOWEVER, EXPLAINED THAT THE GOVT WOULD NOT AT PRESENT ALTER ITS DECISION TO CONSTRUCT AN INDUSTRIAL ZONE FOR JERUSALEM AND NOTHING MORE. OFER ASSURED THE GROUP THAT PART OF THE HOUSING WOULD BE FOR FAMILIES AND THAT THEY WOULD HAVE PRIORITY WHEN UNITS WERE ASSIGNED, PROVIDED APPLICANTS HAVE JOBS AT THE SITE.

9. RE FINANCIAL ASPECTS OF PROJECT, DAVAR REPORTED LAST WEEK THAT INITIAL CALCULATIONS BY JEWISH NATIONAL FUND AND MUNICIPALITY OF JERUSALEM SHOW THAT INFRASTRUCTURE WORK AT MAALE ADUMIM, INCLUDING APPROACH ROADS, WILL COST ABOUT IL 300 RPT 300 MILLION. FIGURE MENTIONED PREVIOUS WAS IL 40 MILLION.

10. COMMENT: WHILE LATEST INCIDENT INVOLVING ATTEMPT AT SETTLEMENT IN WEST BANK PROVIDED GOI WITH NEW OPPORTUNITY TO ASSERT ITS AUTHORITY ON SUBJECT, SETTLEMENT GROUP CAN STILL CLAIM THAT CLARIFICATION OF DECISION ON FAMILY HOUSING BY UNANIMOUS CABINET CONSTITUTES TACTICAL VICTORY. REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THEIR APPETITE HAS BEEN WHETTED TO CONTEST OTHER ISSUES LOOMING IN NEAR FUTURE, SUCH AS SELECTION OF

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WORKERS TO FILL JOBS AT SITE. FACT REMAINS THAT MAALE ADUMIM WILL REMAIN FOR SOME TIME A CONVENIENT TARGET FOR POLITICAL FACTIONS ESPOSING MORE RAPID ISRAELI SETTLEMENT IN TERRITORIES, AND WE CAN PROBABLY EXPECT TO SEE REPEAT PERFORMANCES OF MARCH 2 EVENTS.

11. FACT THAT GOI DECISIONS ON MAALE ADUMIM MIGHT NOT BE AS FORTHCOMING AS SOME WOULD PREFER IS PROBABLY DUE MORE TO PROBLEM OF ALLOCATING SCARCE RESOURCES THAN TO LACK OF GOVT COMMITMENT. GOI HAS DECIDED, FOR WHATEVER REASON, TO BUILD AN INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX AT MAALE ADUMIM: HOWEVER, PRESENCE OF OFER AND BAR-LEV IN KEY ROLES SHOULD GUARANTEE THAT RATE OF PROGRESS THERE IS AT LEAST AS CONSTRAINED BY CURRENT ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AS IS CASE IN OTHER DEVELOPMENT AREAS.

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